College Enrollment and Completion

DEFINITION

College enrollment and completion is the percentage of Rhode Island public high school students who enroll in a two- or four-year college and earn a college diploma (an associate degree or bachelor's degree) within six years of enrollment.[1]

SIGNIFICANCE

Between 2021 and 2031, jobs requiring a postsecondary degree or certificate are projected to grow faster than jobs requiring less education, yet only 37% of Rhode Island adults ages 25 and 64 have a bachelor's degree or higher.[2,3] Between 2017 and 2021 in Rhode Island, 6.5% of adults with a high school diploma were unemployed, compared to 3.1% with a bachelor's degree or higher.[4] During that same period, the median annual income for adults with a high school diploma was $38,638, compared to $60,216 for adults with a bachelor's degree.[5] Students who complete college are more likely to be employed and have higher incomes. While college enrollment rates for low- income students have doubled in recent decades, there are still large gaps in the percentage of students who enroll in and complete college and the types of college students attend. In the U.S., almost half of all low- income students first enroll in a community college, many of which have low
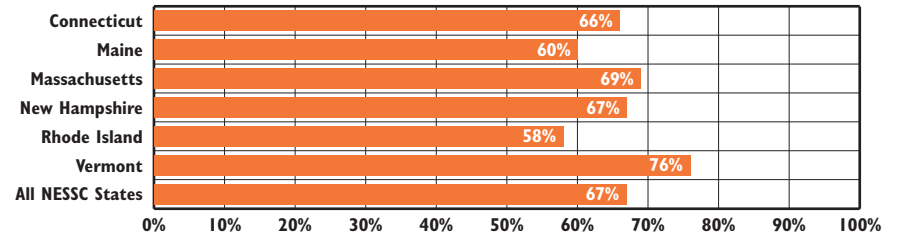
completion rates. Low-income students are also more likely to delay going to college and to have breaks in enrollment, both of which lower their chances of completing their college degrees.[6,7] There are also barriers to attainment for Students of Color. Addressing racial disparities can improve college completion outcomes.[8,9]

Low-income students and Students of Color often arrive at college with academic potential but less academic preparation and social capital than other students. They can benefit from a wide range of supports, including comprehensive assessment and placement, summer transition programs, peer-mentored and peer-facilitated programs that offer tutoring and other academic support, learning communities that allow a group of students to enroll in two or more classes together so they can establish peer relationships that support their success, personal and career counseling, mentoring, and/or referrals to social services.[10,11,12]

Improving college access and completion will require states to make improvements at all points in the early education to college system, including increasing access to high-quality preschool, implementing research-driven early intervention and dropout prevention programs, aligning the K-12 education system with college demands, making college affordable, and providing student support programs.[13,14,15,16]

College Completion, New England Secondary School Consortium States (NESSC), 2015 Cohort

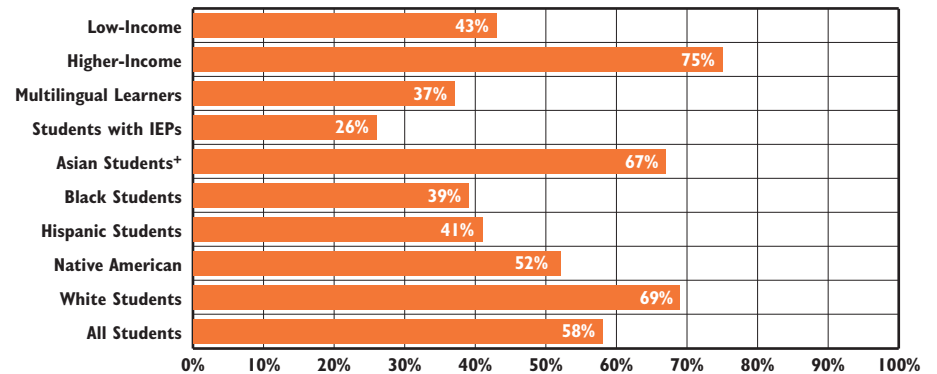|	
Connecticut	66%
Maine	60%
Massachusetts	69%
New Hampshire	67%
Rhode Island	58%
Vermont	76%
All NESSC States	67%

Source: New England Secondary School Consortium. (2022). *Common Data Project: 2022 annual report, school year 2020-2021*. Retrieved April 6, 2023, from www. greatschoolspartnership.org

◆ **Fifty-eight percent of Rhode Island public high school graduates who enrolled in a two- or four-year college in 2015 earned a college diploma within six years.[17]**

Six-Year College Completion by Student Subgroup, Rhode Island, 2015 Cohort

Low-Income	43%
Higher-Income	75%
Multilingual Learners	37%
Students with IEPs	26%
Asian Students+	67%
Black Students	39%
Hispanic Students	41%
Native American	52%
White Students	69%
All Students	58%

Source: New England Secondary School Consortium. (2022). *Common Data Project: 2022 annual report, school year 2020-2021*. Retrieved April 6, 2023, from www.greatschoolspartnership.org. +Data for Asian students is not disaggregated by ethnic group. National research shows large academic disparities across Asian ethnic groups.

◆ **In Rhode Island, there are large gaps in college completion between low-income and higher-income students, with 43% of low-income students completing college within six years, compared to 75% of higher-income students. There are also large disparities by race and ethnicity, language status, and disability.[18]**

Table 55.

College Enrollment and Completion, Rhode Island

SCHOOL DISTRICT	# OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 2022	# OF 2022 HS GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MONTHS	% OF 2022 HS GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MONTHS	# OF STUDENTS WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE IN 2021	# OF 2021 COLLEGE ENROLLEES WHO PERSISTED (ENROLLED FOR A THIRD SEMESTER)	% OF 2021 COLLEGE ENROLLEES WHO PERSISTED (ENROLLED FOR A THIRD SEMESTER)
Barrington	228	186	82%	269	239	89%
Bristol Warren	205	136	66%	157	124	79%
Burrillville	144	92	64%	121	97	80%
Central Falls	150	69	46%	74	45	61%
Chariho	248	156	63%	187	152	81%
Coventry	327	210	64%	276	229	83%
Cranston	789	535	68%	588	440	75%
Cumberland	343	265	77%	277	242	87%
East Greenwich	201	166	83%	144	132	92%
East Providence	323	162	50%	222	162	73%
Exeter-West Greenwich	122	81	66%	100	91	91%
Foster-Glocester	220	135	61%	118	93	79%
Johnston	144	101	70%	168	124	74%
Lincoln	234	179	76%	184	148	80%
Middletown	159	102	64%	128	101	79%
Narragansett	121	90	74%	76	57	75%
New Shoreham	10	*	80%	*	*	100%
Newport	151	76	50%	76	46	61%
North Kingstown	346	283	82%	296	262	89%
North Providence	261	168	64%	208	155	75%
North Smithfield	132	95	72%	105	87	83%
Pawtucket	402	207	51%	245	150	61%
Portsmouth	203	152	75%	205	177	86%
Providence	1,566	770	49%	981	643	66%
Scituate	85	63	74%	86	74	86%
Smithfield	176	149	85%	161	131	81%
South Kingstown	227	176	78%	187	149	80%
Tiverton	120	79	66%	102	81	79%
Warwick	556	349	63%	428	323	75%
West Warwick	196	116	59%	143	88	62%
Westerly	177	109	62%	137	109	80%
Woonsocket	295	95	32%	148	94	64%
Beacon Charter High School	51	29	57%	40	29	73%
Blackstone Academy	74	56	76%	61	45	74%
Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy	80	61	76%	66	49	74%
Charette Charter School	38	21	55%	NA	NA	NA
Paul Cuffee Charter School	64	44	69%	43	34	79%
The Greene School	45	32	71%	24	19	79%
Highlander Charter School	48	28	58%	19	15	79%
RI Nurses Institute Middle College	44	39	89%	39	26	67%
Sheila C. "Skip" Nowell Leadership Academy	32	14	44%	15	*	33%
Trinity Academy for the Performing Arts	25	15	60%	22	14	64%
Village Green Virtual Public Charter School	62	33	53%	37	25	68%
William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School	175	92	53%	89	53	60%
Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center	220	113	51%	115	67	58%
Four Core Cities	2,413	1,141	47%	1,448	932	64%
Remainder of State	6,448	4,419	69%	5,159	4,120	80%
Rhode Island	9,819	6,137	63%	7,177	5,433	76%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

of students who graduated from high school in 2022, # of 2022 high school graduates who enrolled in college within six months, # of students who enrolled in college in 2021, and # of 2021 college enrollees who persisted (were enrolled for a third semester) are all from Rhode Island Department of Education. The # of 2021 college enrollees who persisted may include students enrolled directly after high school or afterwards. Percentages may not sum exactly due to rounding.

Four core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

Students from Little Compton attend high school in Portsmouth, and Jamestown students can choose to attend high school in Narragansett or North Kingstown.

DCYF and Rhode Island School for the Deaf are not reported because there are fewer than 10 students in these cohorts.

* Fewer than 10 students are in this category. Actual numbers are not shown to protect student confidentiality. These numbers are still counted in remainder of state and Rhode Island totals.

NA Schools did not have students graduating in this year.

References

[1,17,18] New England Secondary School Consortium. (2022). *Common Data Project: 2022 annual report, school year 2020-2021.* Retrieved April 6, 2023, from www.newenglandssc.org

[2] U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023). *Employment, wages, and projected change in employment by typical entry-level education.* Retrieved April 3, 2023, from www.bls.gov

[3] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table B23006.

[4] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table S2301.

[5] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2017-2021. Table B20004.